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## **Sen. Kuipers awarded by Michigan community colleges**

**LANSING** — Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, today was honored by the Michigan Community Colleges Association for his work to improve education while restraining the costs of school personnel benefits.

The group, which represents Michigan's 27 public community colleges, gave Kuipers the MCCA Special Recognition Award at its annual convention in Traverse City. The group cited Kuipers' efforts to create rigorous high school graduation requirements and the Michigan Merit Exam. The exam for 11<sup>th</sup>-graders uses a standardized, college-entrance exam, making the test more relevant to students.

The association also noted that Kuipers led efforts in the Senate to control the exploding costs of health-care and retirement benefits offered to school employees. The Senate passed reforms based on proposals offered by the American Federation of Teachers-Michigan and an operating engineers union local, which together represent tens of thousands of Michigan school personnel. If signed into law, the reforms would save hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars that could be put into classrooms to teach children.

"I am honored to be recognized by these education leaders who are at the forefront of training Michigan's young people for the jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century," said Kuipers, who chairs the Senate Education Committee. "Our state's network of community colleges and the skilled graduates they produce provide Michigan a selling point to businesses looking to create jobs that many states don't have."

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